

## HAW REMARKS ON RECEIVING CHC AWARD

I'm very pleased to receive this award today-- because I am proud to have played a part in expanding and protecting the Community Health Center program that has been such an important provider of primary care to so many low-income and disadvantaged people in the United States.

But today is not a day for any of us to look back and take pleasure in past accomplishments. We meet at a time when virtually every health care program we have spent the last twenty years nurturing and supporting is under a threat that would have been inconceivable only a few months ago.

We face the likelihood that the Medicaid program will be turned into a massive block grant, with no strings attached and no State matching funds required. The poor will lose their entitlement to basic health care. We'll lose the protections of the FQHC program which has been so important for the economic viability of CHC's. We'll face low-income people being pushed into managed care arrangements

with inadequate capitation rates and inadequate quality standards.

Our slow but steady progress toward providing health care coverage for poor children will be undone. A bleak picture? yes--and one we will have to use every resource to fight against.

And that's not all the dangers CHC's face. We are looking at reduced funding under the pressures of massive appropriations cutbacks, block grant proposals for the public health service programs--even reinventing government can undermine the independence and effectiveness of your programs. It is not going to be easy.

So what can we do? First and foremost--fight back. Carry your message to each and every Member of the Congress. We've got a lot of new people in Washington, and a lot of them don't know what you do or how important your services are to so many people.

They also don't understand that the number of uninsured Americans is continuing to grow, and that health centers are one of the few resources available to the uninsured.

Push them to come into your centers and see primary care services delivered. Use the power of the media in your area to tell your story. Don't let them support policies that damage your centers without feeling the full weight of what they are doing to you. Don't take anything for granted. And enlist the backing of other health providers in your community. Form alliances with them. Try to get them to help tell your story.

This group has long been known for its commitment to bringing quality health care to some very vulnerable people. You are known as fighters for what you believe in--and that is definitely going to be needed now. I look forward in joining you in this cause.

Thank you.